1: Petrullo E-3 (1933-34) 1939 SS19 Yaruro SS19

The first fact that holds our attention is that Yaruros are strongly ethically conscious. Every shamanistic performance is the means for the propagation of ethical teachings. The shaman, or as the Yaruros believe, the gods and their dead ancestors speaking through the shaman, admonish various individuals and lay down the law for proper conduct. They hold the threat also that misconduct will be displeasing to the mother goddess and as a result life with her will not be as pleasant as it would be if they followed her precepts in this world.

According to the Yaruro philosophy the world is, by its nature, good and it was created by Kuma as a good thing. If any evil exists it has been introduced by men, who have forgotten or come to disregard the laws laid down by the goddess. The world, if unsullied by men, is a perfect integration of the elements which function for the good of mankind. Unfortunately, at times men will disturb the structure. There is implied in this the existence of free will for mankind, since it can change or disturb what was created by Kuma. And if we have recourse to the legends, we find that perhaps the lower animals have free will also, although it is exercised by them much more rarely than by mankind.

Kuma appears also as the teacher of ethical laws. She told the people, told Hatchawa, and now tells the shamans: to live in peace with each other; to respect each other; to help each other; to live good lives; to take care of the parents-in-law and the children-in law. When the wife is ill or otherwise the mother-in-law should look after the needs of her son-in-law, although they do not speak to each other. The Yaruros will find recompense for such moral living after death. They are poor on this earth but will be rich like Kuma in the other world.

During my stay the women remained bashful, never speaking directly to me, and when I approached generally looking away. In the latter days they would laugh merrily as they fled. Their culture does not permit free social intercourse with men, but any request on my part relayed to them through their husbands or brothers was eagerly complied with, and with better than good humor.

All were helpful toward each other and there did not appear to be any dissension. Extreme care was taken that a person's rights and prerogatives were not infringed upon. The husband never seemed to request anything of his wife that did not lie in her province, and when strange demands were made to please me, entire freedom was given to the wife, or daughter, to do as it pleased her. Any misfortune, however slight or serious, that would produce some expression of anger among white people was met by the Yaruros with merry laughter. At night each family group lay on the sands

4: Leeds E-5 (1958) 1960 SS19 Yaruro SS19

the community may do the shaman's work if he chooses, just as any can travel to the other-world or commune with the gods, although, because of age, temperament, or individual taste, not every one does so. There were, in fact, two shamans among the nine men of the writer's village, as well as a number of men who cured and who occasionally sang verse intonations in the *tonghés* although they were not shamans. The shamans are no more than respected community members outside the ceremony. Here again we observe the egalitarianism and individual self-determinism which is so much a pattern of this culture.

The *tonghé* also clearly shows the relationships which prevail between men and gods. The shamans and the other adults of the village converse with the gods in great mutual respect. They do not manipulate them nor minister to them, nor implore them. Before the gods, they are in a position corresponding to active and adept junior members of the village before their elders and especially their lineal ascendants. Furthermore, in a very real sense, no individual person, *qua* person, deals with the gods. The community, with its religious catalyst, the shaman, is the unit of action. The only individual relations with the gods occur in dreams, unconsciousness, and death. Dreams about gods are made public by singing aloud in sleep, the experience of unconsciousness is recounted publicly, and death, too, becomes public because the dead man is accessible through the *tonghés*.

The directness of contact between man and gods again emphasizes the unity of cosmos, society, and man. Within this unity, the sharp division of a male sphere from a female sphere is found. These quite coordinate spheres, in the other-worlds as in the hither-world, in religion as in socio-economic life, are linked through the household.

In conclusion, I would like briefly to review the major dimensions of Yaruro ideology. We may state these as a set of propositions, each presenting a major dimension of the ideology.

1. Cosmic structure. *The cosmos is static, limited, concrete, and internally continuous in that no barriers separate man and his society in the physical world from the nonphysical world.* The parts of the universe together form a rather rigid, symmetrical, architectonic structure, although each individual Yaruro may vary the description of the whole to suit his particular taste. All parts are of roughly coordinate importance. The major motions of nature, such as thunder and lightning, the revolutions of sun and moon, are often embodied, personalized, and independently operating entities, moved by semi-human motivations.

2. The good. *Goodness inheres generally in the cosmos as a system. The goodness manifests itself in understood causes and concretely and describably known parts of the cosmos which, whether places, persons, or things, are given exact locations.* Conversely all known and localizable objects, persons, or places and understood causes are generally good.

3. The not-good. *Evil, which is not polar to good, finds its locus in specific persons, things, or events inside or outside the cosmos, and is manifest in specific results. The underlying causes of evil, however, are inac-*

4: Leeds E-5 (1958) 1960 SS19 Yaruro SS19

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cessible to the senses or to understanding. For example, all cosmic or extra-cosmic personnel whose locations are variable, vague, or unknown, are capable of doing evil. Being neither known nor localizable, they are not part of the unified kin and cosmic structure in which gods, the dead, and men and their respective lands are tied together. They exist outside society, hence only loosely attached to, or even outside of, the cosmos. Thus disease and death are both caused by sorcerers (*brujos*, Sp; *yareké*, Y.). These are described as wandering about freely in the savanas where they attack persons. Not only can the Yaruro advert to them only in the most indefinite way with regard to form, but they also specifically deny that human beings are or can be sorcerers or that human beings practice witchcraft. Thus, to the Yaruro, the major evils of disease and of wicked hearts (*corazones malos*) of individual Yaruros are caused by unknowable spirits. Even the chief and father of the *yareké*, Abakári, is as indefinite in form as his sons, and the Yaruro either do not locate him at all, or are very much disagreed as to his locus. No proper Yaruro self has any personal contact with him. Though the *yareké* are kin-related among themselves, they are not "of our family" (*de la familia de nosotros*), hence outside of our society.

4. The good society. *In the good cosmos, the good society consists of kin-related gods, the dead, communities and individuals of largely coordinate and reciprocal statuses living in tranquility and sharing all things.* Gods, community, and individuals are all actors knowing the general principles of the cosmic society. Such principles include kinship, equivalent rights and privileges for all.

5. The determinants of action. *In the good society, action is guided by precept, suggestion, and by sensibility to the wants of others and of self, but compulsion and hostility are not permissible.*

6. Nature of precepts and principles of action. *In the good society, precepts and principles are general rather than specific and prescriptive.* The result is that patterns of behavior and thought in Yaruro society are quite unformalized, unritualized, and unspecified. All classes of behavior show a great range of variability and flexibility. The individual can choose to fulfil his obligations to the community, an the community to the cosmos, in various ways.

7. Freedom or restriction of will. *The individual not only has a broad range of choice of actions but is not compelled by the nature of the cosmos nor by the personel in it to follow any particular path. He has free will with regard to the ordained order of things* (4) .Each man is, in theory, as in fact, to a remarkable degree self-determining in actions and thought. Except in extreme divergences, he need not account to anyone.

Several dimensions which appear as dualistic distinctions in western thought are conceptually single in Yaruro ideology. The self, as the expe-

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(4) Petrullo (1939, p. 229) first noted this aspect.

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riences in shamanism, dreams, unconsciousness, and immediately after death show, is conceived as being undifferentiated and unitary, though divisible into like, but unequally active parts. No mind-body distinction is made. Again in a static and limited universe within which, however, all parts, visible and invisible, sensible or not directly sensible, are in a flux of interaction, all things have some degree of reality. The distinction "real-unreal" as it is understood in the West is lacking among the Yaruro. Further, in this same universe, those parts which we might designate "immaterial" are, to the Yaruro, quite as concrete and sensed as the so-called "material" objects and events. The western distinction between "material" and "immaterial" is not a meaningful one to the Yaruro. Finally, the unity and continuity of what westerners would call "natural" and "supernatural" has been discussed above. Such a distinction is not made by the Yaruro.

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